



# **SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT**

**2008/09**

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## Chairman's Foreword

Welcome to the scrutiny annual report for 2008/09. As usual, this has been another productive year as we have seen our reconfigured structure and processes bed in and we have continued to hold service providers to account and secure improvements in services for local people.

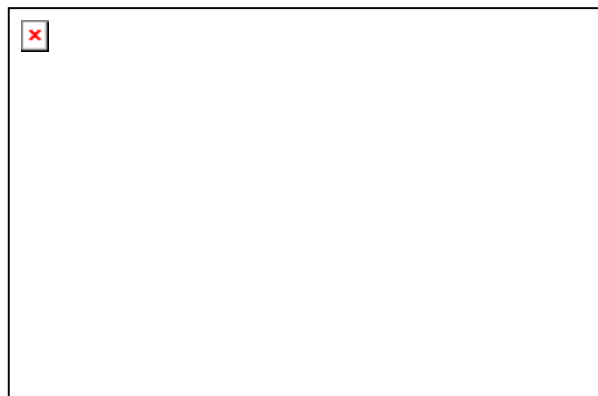
In last year's report, we outlined the proposals for the changes to our structures. This would see the abolition of the service based sub committees and their replacement with a single Overview and Scrutiny committee and a Performance and Finance sub committee. This was a real innovation for us and in particular, the introduction of the Performance and Finance sub committee has ensured that the council's and our partners' performance is closely monitored. This was something that we had not achieved with quite as much focus and rigour in the past and it has made a significant improvement to our strategic approach. In order to assess the robustness of our new structures, we enlisted the help of the Improvement and Development Agency. In September, an independent facilitator worked with us to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the structures.

Several strengths were identified, in particular a more focussed work programme, committed co-opted Members and Lead Members for performance and policy. Some advantages to dissolving the sub-committees were also identified. It was suggested that cross-cutting work has been made easier and that the new structure allows for more effective use of Member time.

The workshop also suggested some difficulties with the new structure: the lead member structure did not appear to be fully understood, awareness of the function amongst the public at large appears limited, the commitment of all backbench councillors needs to be secured, there appear to be limited resources available. There was great concern about the capacity to consider health issues. We agreed to work cross party to ensure an effective overview and scrutiny function for the benefit of the people of Harrow.

Also this year, we have participated in 'Evidence for Accountability' project. Other participants in the project were the Audit Commission, OfSted, the National Audit Office, The Welsh Assembly, Public Accounts Select Committee and the Healthcare Commission. In order to reach conclusions on the effectiveness of our processes and how well we gather, analyse and utilise the evidence in our review processes, the project monitored our review 'Delivering a Strengthened Voluntary and Community Sector' from the early scoping phase, through the evidence gathering process to the development of the review's recommendations. In April we received their comments:

In March we hosted the launch of the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) guidance on Councillor Calls for Action. Nearly 100 representatives of scrutiny committees in the London/South East area attended the launch and participated in the associated work shops, designed to help all of us ensure the most effective implementation of this challenging piece of legislation.



*Harrow scrutiny councillors participate in the discussions*

As we go to press we await the result of the national CfPS 'Good Scrutiny' awards. We have been shortlisted for an award for our review, 'Delivering a Strengthened Voluntary and Community Sector' alongside colleagues from Westminster and Staffordshire. More details of this ambitious project are included in the section on the work of the Overview and Scrutiny committee, but this was an extremely challenging project which enabled us to work with our colleagues from the voluntary and community sector to ensure that we have a 21<sup>st</sup> century relationship with key service providers. We are extremely grateful for the commitment given to the project by 3<sup>rd</sup> sector colleagues.

In this context, this year saw the establishment of the scrutiny pool of advisors. In all of the work that we do, we try to ensure that we engage with community experts, to ensure we can fully understand the issues being investigated, from an alternative perspective to the council's. We felt that we would like to offer these volunteers a more structured relationship with scrutiny so in future we plan to meet with them twice a year to ensure we are taking their views into account and engaging with them as effectively as possible. We would like to take this opportunity to thank those residents and community representatives who have given up their time to work with us, you have certainly made a significant and important contribution to our work and we look forward to continuing to work with you in the future.

In the light of the local elections in 2010 and in order to make sure that scrutiny remains outside of the political maelstrom, we intend to ensure that all of our review work is completed early in the New Year. The Overview and Scrutiny section of the annual report outline the projects that will occupy us for the next 9 months but we look forward to the remaining challenges of this administration and to ensuring that the service that are delivered to local people are of the highest quality.



*Councillor Stanley Sheinwald  
Chairman Overview and Scrutiny committee*



*Councillor Mitzi Green  
Vice Chairman Overview and Scrutiny committee*

## Report from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Further to the reconfiguration of the scrutiny structures, the Overview and Scrutiny committee now meets every month. In order to ensure that there is adequate time to consider some of the more high profile issues, a number of the meetings are now themed: there are 4 health meetings per year and 2 education meetings. Whilst we try to ensure that the agendas are reserved exclusively for the specific purpose, we are able to respond flexibly to urgent matters. We are extremely grateful for the officers, partners and portfolio holders who have attended our meetings and provided us with such useful information during the year.

### **Health meetings**

This year has seen a significant amount of agenda time being given over to the consideration of health matters. We are grateful to the support given to the committee by Sarah Crowther, Chief Executive of the PCT, Andrew Bland, Director of Commissioning at the PCT and Fiona Wise, Chief Executive of the NW London Hospitals NHS Trust. We are also grateful to representatives from the Central and NW London Mental Health Foundation Trust, the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital for meeting with the committee to discuss their annual health checks.

As the Healthcare for London proposals are released and as our local healthcare providers have begun to consider how to implement the principles behind Lord Darzi's recommendations, Harrow PCT have brought a number of local implementation issues to councillors for their consideration. In particular we are grateful for the opportunity we have been given to discuss with the PCT the future development of the Mollison Way surgery and proposals regarding Kemore Clinic and Alexandra Avenue.

*The borough's first polyclinic at Alexandra Avenue*



The number of health issues being considered at the Overview and Scrutiny committee also reflects the fact that our health partners have faced some difficult issues this year, including, sadly, the recurrence of maternal deaths at Northwick Park hospital. An innovation this year has been to take the Overview and Scrutiny committee out of the Civic Centre, and in acknowledgement of a number local health concerns, the 23<sup>rd</sup> September meeting was hosted by Northwick Park hospital. Because of the strategic proximity of the hospital to both Harrow and Brent councils, Brent councillors were invited to attend. This was a useful experience and we look forward to holding more of our meetings in the wider Harrow community in future.

### **Education meetings**

There have been two meetings specifically designated to consider education/children's issues. The first in November 2008, considered the educational achievement of the borough's children, Special Educational Needs provision and the council's response to the Children and Young Person's Bill 2007.

The second meeting in April this year, considered the whole range of children's policy issues: development of a children's trust in the borough, adoptions, the 'Children's Pledge' the safeguarding children plan and the overall children's plan. The committee was very grateful to Cllr Christine Bednell, the Children's Services Portfolio Holder and Cllr Anjana Patel, Schools and Children's Development Portfolio Holder and the Corporate Director for Children's Services for their attendance at the meeting and the advice, comment and information which they provided to us.

### **General meetings**

We held two question and answer sessions with the Leader. The first in June 2008, with the Chief Executive, considered the Council's Corporate Assessment Score, the IDeA Peer Review, resident satisfaction and the Council budget.

The second session was held in December and members of the Overview and Scrutiny committee discussed the development of the budget with the Leader and the Corporate Director of Finance. Councillors were able to investigate, amongst other things the impact of the credit crunch on the council's finances and on the borough in general.

The committee has also considered a range of other strategic issues:

- In February, we were delighted to meet with the borough Commander, Richard Walton and Cllr Susan Hall, Environment and Community Safety Portfolio Holder, to discuss the strategic priorities for crime and disorder reduction.
- In October we considered the council's communications and were grateful for the advice and comment provided by Cllr Paul Osborn, Communication and Corporate Services Portfolio Holder
- Cllr Osborn also attended the committee in July to discuss the results of the staff survey with us.
- In July and November, Cllr Macleod-Cullinane attended the committee to discuss a range of housing and social care issues.

We also received reports on a number of other issues including:

- Councillor Calls for Action
- Local Area Agreement
- Local Involvement Network
- Adult and children's complaints
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment



*Councillor calls for action could mean quite a change for Overview and Scrutiny*

We are very grateful to all of the officers who have provided us with the information upon which to base our investigations.

## Scrutiny Reviews

The committee has commissioned a wide-ranging work programme this year and a number of excellent projects have been undertaken.

### Delivering a Strengthened Voluntary and Community Sector.



*Consultation with the sector was a key part of the project*

This challenging piece of work was undertaken in full partnership with the voluntary sector – we would like to thank Jula Smith, Harrow Association of Voluntary Service, Mike Coker, Community Link Up Julie Brown, Kids Can Achieve, John Woolf, Woodcraft Folk, Julie Bellchambers, Harrow Voluntary Youth Workers forum, Mohamed Ali, Iwanaaji Somali Disabled Association and Ramji Cauhan, an education co-optee on the Overview and Scrutiny committee for joining scrutiny on this project. The project has resulted in a number of far reaching proposals which will help to make a significant difference to the relationship between the council and the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector and ensure that the resources of both the council and the sector are used to the best advantage of our local residents.

17 of the 22 recommendations of the review have been agreed by cabinet and three of the remaining four will be implemented as part of the development of the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector strategy. Only one of the 22 recommendations was rejected.

The review has also been shortlisted for a 'Good Scrutiny Award' by the Centre for Public Scrutiny. This is a great achievement and is the first time we have received such a nomination. It is a great honour for us and reflects well on the cross working party scrutiny in the borough.

### Standing Review of the Budget

This project is a long standing piece of work which will enable scrutiny councillors to make an ongoing contribution to the development of the council's budget. The interim report of the group was received and endorsed by Cabinet in December 2008. In the second phase of the project, we are considering a number of issues which we hope will help the authority to emerge from the recession in a healthy financial state – development of the capital budget, options for the development of shared services and revenue income maximisation options. We are extremely grateful to the help of the co-optees from the Open Budget Group who have joined the review: Elizabeth Hugo, Cliff Lichfield and Philp Morrish.

### Right To Manage

In response to a number of concerns raised regarding the Right to Manage process being introduced in the borough, we held a challenge panel to investigate the issues identified. The findings of the panel were passed to the portfolio holder for Adults and Housing services to assist him to support the development of more constructive relationships between the housing tenants and the tenant management organisation. We are grateful for the support of Linda Robinson, from Local Agenda 21, who joined us on this project.

## Council Improvement Programme

The Council Improvement Programme was developed to support the council to improve the services it delivers to local people in a more targeted, strategic manner and to help the organisation improve its reputation. The panel hoped to offer a challenge to the content of the programme in order to ensure that it was targeting the most important improvement priorities. The panel was able to identify a number of issues such as the need for robust monitoring processes to ensure that the council is able to learn from both its successes and its failures, the need for effective management procedures to ensure the delivery of improvements across the council and the need to ensure that the programme is able to evolve. The findings of the panel were endorsed by Cabinet.

## Extended schools

This piece of work will be considered at the Overview and Scrutiny committee in June. The project has identified how effectively the council's extended schools are working and areas for further development and improvement which would include more effective engagement of schools in the regime and an assessment of how well the extended schools are managed in order to improve performance across the board. The report will be presented to cabinet after it has been considered at the Overview and Scrutiny committee in June. We were very grateful for the support of Julie Brown, Kids Can Achieve and Despo Speel and Ramji Chauhan, education co-optees on the Overview and Scrutiny committee for their support on this project

## Sustainability

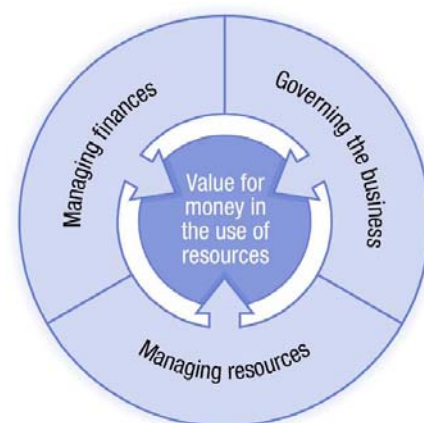
We began work on this in-depth project to consider the council's approach to sustainability early in 2009. The project comprises three specific parts:

- Consideration of the council's climate change strategy
- The impact of the recession on the council's business base
- The impact of the recession on community cohesion.

The report from the first of these three projects, consideration of the climate change strategy, will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny committee in June. The remaining components of the project will be carried over into the next year's work programme.

## Use of Resources

The regime under which the council's performance is rated nationally has changed. Comprehensive Performance Assessment has been replaced by the Comprehensive Area Assessment which comprises both an assessment of how well the council uses the resources available to it and how well the council and our partners understand the needs of local people and how well we meet these needs. In order to support the council through the process, we have been involved in a number of sessions to discuss the council's performance.



*The new use of resources model*

In particular we met with officers to discuss the self assessment that the council wishes to submit in terms of our use of resources. This challenge panel was able to make a number of recommendations about the content of the document and its overall thrust.



## **Standing Review of NHS Finances**

This long standing investigation of the issues that led to the significant financial crisis in local health providers in 2005 -06 has now been completed. By meeting with representatives of the PCT, the NW London Hospital Trust and council social care providers, the review has been able to work with colleagues to safeguard the interests of residents by highlighting their experiences of the strategies adopted by the organisations to resolve their budget crises. The review highlighted in particular the concerns of carers as local budgets were reduced to meet the financial targets. The group has decided to ask the Performance and Finance sub committee to maintain a watching brief over the performance of health partners. We are particularly grateful to Janet Smith, Harrow Mind, Ruth Coman, Avani Modasia, Age concern Harrow and Julian Maw, Harrow LINK for joining the group and offering their local insight to support the group's investigation.

## **Place Survey**

To support colleagues constructing the place survey we held a challenge panel to identify the additional questions that we felt would offer the most value to the council. Our proposals were incorporated into the final draft of the survey.

## ***Priorities for the coming year***

We are now entering the final year of the current administration and the final year therefore for scrutiny before the next election. In order to safeguard the political neutrality of scrutiny and to ensure that our deliberations don't get bogged down in election activity, we have agreed that all of our projects will be completed by January 2010. Our work programme for the next year will comprise a number of projects, prioritised from the list below:

- Continuation of the standing review of the budget
- Further work on proposals as they emerge from Healthcare for London
- Completion of the sustainability review, - economic development and support for the council's business base and community cohesion.
- Young people and crime
- Communications and fear of crime
- Transition from children to adults services
- Adults and Housing Transformation Programme Plan
- Performance of the Housing Revenue Account
- Housing repair contract – Kier
- Community lettings
- NW London Acute Health Services Review
- Voluntary sector grants criteria

The final priority given to each of these projects will be determined by the Overview and Scrutiny committee in June and the methodology for undertaking each will be considered in more detail over the summer.

We look forward to reporting the successful completion of these projects and others in our final report in May 2010



*Councillor Stanley Sheinwald  
Chairman Overview and Scrutiny committee*



*Councillor Mitzi Green  
Vice Chairman Overview and Scrutiny committee*

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2008/09**

Committee meetings	12 ordinary 4 special
Attendance by Leader of the Council	2 meetings
Attendance by Portfolio Holders	Councillor David Ashton (2) Councillor Christine Bednell (1) Councillor Susan Hall (2) Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane (2) Councillor Chris Mote (1) Councillor Paul Osborn (2) Councillor Anjana Patel (1)
Attendance by Chief Executive	1 meeting

## **Performance and Finance Sub-Committee:**

The Performance and Finance sub-committee has firmly established itself and settled well into its role in 2008/09.

The remit of Performance and Finance, the engine for the scrutiny process which analyses performance information, identifies key issues through the performance framework and escalates matters of long-term importance has, this year, been expanded to look at partner organisations such as the Primary Care Trust and their impact on the delivery of services to residents.

During this year, the Performance and Finance sub-committee has considered and followed up on a number of health related issues. We have scrutinised the issue of maternal deaths at Northwick Park Hospital. The Trust was asked to report on the number of maternal deaths compared with the number of births against the national average for maternity deaths over the last three years (2005-2008). This report was requested by the Performance and Finance Committee due to concerns about the occurrence of the three deaths over a 10 month period at Northwick Park Hospital and whether or not there were underlying trends linking the three maternal deaths in 2007/08. The Performance and Finance sub-committee spoke to and received a report from the Chief Executive of the North West London Hospitals NHS Trust who informed the committee that a further review, chaired by a Non-Executive Director of the Primary Care Trust (PCT), with three expert independent clinicians on the Panel, had been set up to establish whether there were any underlying trends linking the deaths. A review report was also submitted to the Healthcare Commission to ensure that the review report had fulfilled its terms of reference, that the investigation was conducted in a proper manner and to provide an external opinion on the findings of the review report.

In addition to this, we received updates on Healthy Schools. The National Healthy Schools Programme has four aspects to it. They are personal, social, health education; emotional, health and well being; physical activity and healthy eating. These themes relate to both the school curriculum and the emotional and physical learning environment in school. Each theme includes a number of criteria that schools need to fulfil in order to achieve National Healthy School Status. All Harrow schools are registered to participate in the National Healthy Schools programme with a target that 90% of Harrow schools will achieve healthy schools status by late 2009.

We received a six monthly update on the Accord MP review which Performance and Finance sub-committee had conducted in the autumn of 2007 regarding the operation of the Accord MP partnership, looking at how public realm work (involving highway maintenance and other infrastructure services) was carried out before the partnership, how it was currently being done and what lessons could be learnt.

The Director of Public Health provided us with a six monthly update on the Obesity review which was undertaken between May and November 2007. The review looked at how to best tackle the issue of obesity within the borough. The review focused on 2 areas children's opportunities for access to physical activity and adulthood obesity and diabetes. At the six monthly update the Performance and Finance sub-committee received an update on the progress being made with regards to implementing the recommendations made by the review group. These updates continue to come to Performance and Finance on a six-monthly basis.

Performance and Finance also received updates on other reviews ranging from health to housing, and enterprise resource planning to workforce development. As part of our role we monitor the progress that has been made with regards to the implementation of recommendations made in reviews and how this has affected the performance of those service areas.

We have returned again to housing speaking to the Portfolio Holder, Corporate and Divisional directors of housing regarding progress made on the delivery of the Decent Homes Standard- in particular the levels of satisfaction by residents and standard of work being delivered by Kier. Furthermore we also looked into the suspension of non-urgent repairs until the next financial year and the financial overview of the Housing Revenue Account. We have proposed that a review group will commence a challenge panel on the Housing Revenue Account later in the year to identify a number of steps that can be taken to stem the eventual the depletion of funds from the account as well as how this eventual depletion will affect the housing service.

We are pleased that the Performance and Finance sub-committee has been able to extend its remit to look at partner organisations' performance and to further drive and support service improvements that ensure Harrow residents receive effective and efficient services. This is at the heart of the committee's work and we look forward to continuing to make further contributions in this field.



**Councillor Mark Versallion**  
**Chairman Performance and Finance sub committee**



**Cllr Brian Gate**  
**Vice Chairman Performance and Finance sub committee**

## **PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE 2008/09**

Committee meetings	4
Attendance by Leader of the Council	None
Attendance by Portfolio Holders	Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane (1) Councillor Paul Osborn (1)
Attendance by Chief Executive	None

## Report from lead members for Adult Health and Social Care

### Consideration of local health and social care issues

As discussed in the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, this year a number of committee meetings have focused on local health issues, reflecting the importance and priority given to health concerns in a Harrow context.

In addition to the issues considered in a committee setting, we have continued to facilitate the relationship with our local NHS trusts by informally meeting with their directors and visiting their facilities. Prior to Harrow PCT's consultation on changes at Mollison Way Medical Centre, we received an informal briefing from the Chief Executive of the PCT to discuss local concerns and the proposed way forward. We value these interactions outside of formal committee time.

We continue to meet quarterly with the Council's Corporate Director of Adult and Housing Services to discuss issues around social care. We have pursued a particular interest in safeguarding adults and protecting the most vulnerable people in our communities, and also the personalisation agenda. Harrow has made great progress in this area - one in five individual budgets in London is for Harrow residents. The targets for next year are equally challenging and we look forward to charting Harrow's progress in offering its residents personal budgets and self-directed support.

### Healthcare for London – consultation on new major trauma and stroke services for London

In *Healthcare for London: A Framework for Action*, Professor Lord Ara Darzi set out a vision for the transformation of health and healthcare in London. The public consultation on the principles for change and models of healthcare in London *Consulting the Capital* ran from November 2007 to March 2008. A second consultation proposed some of the first steps to make the vision reality, by focusing on particular clinical areas that had been identified as needing immediate attention – adult services for acute stroke care and adult services for acute major trauma care.



As the proposals were considered 'substantial variation or development' to local healthcare services, a public consultation statutorily required the affected Overview and Scrutiny Committees to form a pan-London Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) to consider the implications and the consultation process from a scrutiny perspective. Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee participating in the pan-London JOSC was represented by one elected member of their authority – Harrow's representative was Councillor Vina Mithani.

In Harrow we also reconvened our scrutiny working group for Healthcare for London, which facilitated Harrow's contribution to the JOSC, as well as being responsible for putting together Harrow scrutiny's individual response to the Healthcare for London consultation. In order to put this together we held an extremely valuable challenge session with key stakeholders to identify local concerns and views on the proposals. Through this we gathered evidence from

North West London Hospitals Trust, NHS Harrow, Harrow Association of Voluntary Services, Harrow Local Involvement Network, Harrow Council Adult Services, Harrow Council's Executive Member for Adults and Housing, Imperial College Healthcare Trust and the London Ambulance Service. We submitted our local response to the Healthcare for London by the time public consultation closed on 8 May 2009.

### **Providing scrutiny commentaries to NHS trusts' self assessments**

Each year, every NHS trust is required to self-assess their organisation against a set of 24 core standards – known as their 'annual health check' declaration. Overview and Scrutiny Committees can offer comments on these self-assessments which are submitted to the Healthcare Commission. The Healthcare Commission uses the information given by third parties to form their performance ratings of NHS trusts which are issued every autumn. We discussed the self-assessments with the trusts at our Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in March 2009 and provided commentaries for each of the self-assessments produced by the four NHS trusts that serve our borough.

### **Visit to mental health facilities at Northwick Park Hospital**

On Monday 9 March 2009, we visited the mental facilities run by Central and North West London Foundation Trust at Northwick Park Hospital. This visit was arranged primarily as part of scrutiny's evidence gathering for NHS Trusts' annual health check process and gave us an opportunity to speak with mental health practitioners about how they meet the needs of mental health patients and their families and carers and also the plans for the future.

### **Looking forward**

We anticipate that health and social care issues will continue to feature prominently on the policy horizon in the year to come. Locally in particular, we would expect to keep an eye on the progress of polyclinics in Harrow and the implementation of the new stroke services for North West London, as proposed by Healthcare for London. On the social care front, we will keep track of the continued progress of the Council's Adult and Housing transformation programme and its various workstreams. In both health and social care, it will be important to work with our local involvement network (LINK) to ensure that both the LINK and scrutiny are tackling issues of local importance in a complementary manner to add value to local service improvement and policy development.



**Policy Lead**  
**Councillor Vina Mithani**



**Performance Lead**  
**Councillor Rekha Shah**

# Report from the Lead Members for Children and Young People

Over the past year a number of significant children and young people issues have arisen, many of which we have considered at the regular meetings we hold with the Corporate Director for Children's Services. These meetings have been extremely valuable for following up on key issues outside of the committee setting. The topics we have covered over the year culminated in a special children and young people Overview and Scrutiny meeting that was held at the end of the year. Detailed and challenging discussions took place at the meeting where the Children's Services Portfolio Holder and the Schools and Children's Development Portfolio Holder were also in attendance.

## **Safeguarding**

A number of high profile and negative cases relating to safeguarding children and young people have come up this year, and most notably the unfortunate death of Baby P. As lead members we held key discussions with the Corporate Director for Children's Services to ensure that the right processes and procedures are in place with regards to safeguarding children and young people in Harrow. All councillors are Corporate Parents but as the scrutiny leads we will continue to avidly scrutinise our safeguarding procedures and the work of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. CRB checks have been carried out on all Councillors and further training will be provided on being a corporate parent in 2009/10. The interaction of children looked after with councillors will also be monitored by us through the Young Voices programme. Furthermore, we will keep a watching brief on the implementation of the recommendations arising from the Laming review, *The Protection of Children in England*.

## **School Reorganisation**

A major change in the configuration of Harrow schools was agreed this year, as leads the reorganisation of schools in Harrow was policy change which we took a particular interest in. We held a number of discussions with the Director for Children's Services to ensure that the age of transfer to 11 years and the alignment of first and middle schools to fit in line with National Curriculum Key Stages was on course to be delivered as efficiently as possible. We were keen to ensure the impact of the change in the age of transfer is minimal.

## **Children's Trusts**

We have been avidly monitoring the development of Children's Trust arrangements in Harrow, especially in view of the numerous government guidance documents that have been published over the last two years. Our work in this area culminated in an update report to Overview and Scrutiny. We were pleased to learn that adequate progress is being made towards developing an effective Harrow Children's Trust, ensuring agencies work together for the benefit of children and families in Harrow. The lead members will continue to monitor Trust arrangements in 2009/10.

## **Adoption Inspection**

During the year we also looked into the council's adoption procedures following the presentation of an inspection report at Adoption Panel. We were particularly concerned with the follow up and after care procedures. Detailed constructive discussions took place at the April Overview and Scrutiny meeting where other members of Overview and Scrutiny also scrutinised the policies and procedures we have in place for adoption and fostering. A number of our concerns were allayed but we will continue to ensure that the adoption and fostering services we provide remain up to standard.

## **Transition from Children and Young People's Services to Adults Services**

The issue of transition from children's care to adults is another area in which we focussed our attention on this year. Of particular concern was the need for the council to develop better links for children moving into adult care with a particular emphasis on those with disabilities and learning difficulties. The disjoint between the funded management of the child and the independent individual management of adults and the difference in the whole package of care provided is something that we are keen to address. Also relevant to this is the progress of the personalisation agenda. We look forward to reviewing the draft strategy that should be available this summer and following this with a more focussed piece of work in 2009/10.

## **Light touch review of Extended Schools as community resources**

In addition to the issues we covered throughout the year, Councillor Margaret Davine also chaired a light touch review of Extended Schools as community resources. The review took place between September 2008 and March 2009. As part of the review, the review group went on a number of school visits, witnessing extended school activities and consulting with parents, children, extended schools cluster co-ordinators and head teachers. The final report of the review will be presented at the Overview and Scrutiny meeting in June 2009.



*Extended schools in Harrow*

## **Looking forward**

We expect that over the coming year issues relating to children and young people will remain paramount. We will continue to monitor the progress of a number of new developments such as the progress of schools reorganisation, the development of Children's Trust arrangements and our progress in maintaining our safeguarding procedures. We expect to play a significant role in the upcoming challenge panel/ light touch review of young people and crime.



**Policy Lead**  
**Councillor Margaret Davine**



**Performance Lead**  
**Councillor Janet Mote**



## **Report from the Lead Members for Corporate Effectiveness**

We have continued to meet during 2008/09 to discuss matters relating to the corporate effectiveness of the council and we are very grateful to those officers who have attended our briefings to provide us with information.

### **Local Area Agreement**

We have received a number of reports this year on the performance of our Local Area Agreement. Whilst we were happy to hear that we are likely to hit target, at least to the minimum 60%, for the majority of the agreement, we were disappointed to hear that we are unlikely to receive any reward grant for two:

- Improving the schools attendance at the 25% worst performing primary and secondary schools
- Percentage of people who feel that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together.

We were advised that in the case of 'school attendances', because the performance of Harrow's schools is amongst some of the highest in the country, this target was set exceptionally high which will make its achievement difficult, and we are reassured on this.

However, with regard to 'people from different backgrounds in the area getting on with each other', we are rather more concerned. Indeed we were particularly concerned to hear that performance has in fact, deteriorated. In the light of the recession and the real hope that Harrow, one of the most multi-cultural boroughs in the country, maintains its real spirit of community and diversity, we intend to continue to monitor this. We also welcome the work being undertaken by the scrutiny Sustainability review.

We were also advised that the council has now signed a new Local Area Agreement, which whilst not attracting the same level of reward grant and now pump priming funding, will help to focus the activities of the Harrow Strategic Partnership

### **Human Resources**

We raised a number of issues with officers from Human Resources as we have been particularly concerned about the capacity of the organisation in the light of the need to deliver cultural change and improvements to residents. Whilst the Chief Executive has made it very clear that he expects to see significant change in terms of the culture of the organisation, we have been concerned at the length of time it is taking to achieve this change and to implement the processes needed to support the change. In particular we have received information regarding the council's work force planning processes, the rate and recording of sickness absences across the council and staff morale. Whilst we have been reassured regarding some of the fundamental processes which are now in place across the council, we will continue to monitor the speed with which the council is delivering real cultural change across the organisation.

### **Place Survey**

We received information regarding levels of satisfaction being expressed by local people regarding the quality of council and other public services in the borough. We were glad to hear that in general satisfaction levels are encouraging. However, we were concerned to hear that:

- It is perceived that local public services do not promote the needs of local people
- Expectations regarding local services are rising faster than the capacity of providers
- Residents generally seem badly informed

This is an extremely useful survey and we are glad to hear that it will be helping the council to focus on the issues of most importance to local people.

### **Councillor Calls for Action**

These changes offer an interesting opportunity for ward councillors to champion issues raised by their local constituents by offering them an opportunity to seek resolution of ward concerns via the Overview and Scrutiny committee. We have received a number of briefings on the proposals which were implemented with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April this year and we are happy that, despite initial delays in the publication of guidance on the implementation of the proposals, the council is prepared for the implementation and has worked out how the new regime fits with the council's existing complaints process and how Overview and Scrutiny and councillor calls for action will add value to how the council addresses local resident's' concerns.

### **Looking forward**

We anticipate that a key area of our work will continue to be the capacity of the organisation to deliver real change. As such we expect to continue to monitor improvements in human resources functions and to monitor the extent of cultural change. The council has an ambitious and challenging improvement agenda, and we feel that ensuring that the corporate capacity of the organisation to deliver this agenda should be a priority for us. We will also continue to monitor customer satisfaction and the impact that the recession may be having on this.



***Councillor Stanley Sheinwald***  
***Policy Lead***



***Councillor Mark Versallion***  
***Performance Lead***

## Report from the Lead Members for Safer and Stronger Communities

During this year we have spent some time looking at how the various community safety and policing bodies in the borough including the (HPCCG, CDRP, Race Hate Forum, Safer Neighbourhood Panel etc) link together.



We have also met with the Community Safety Manager on a number of occasions to discuss emerging issues and developments. Of particular importance to our work are the implications and duties that have recently come into force under the Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Regulations 2009, requiring us to scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions.

At the February Overview and Scrutiny meeting we considered the Harrow Strategic Assessment which provided a six-monthly profile of crime and safety in the borough. At this meeting we had the opportunity to put questions to the Borough Commander, Chief Superintendent Richards Walton and the Deputy Portfolio Holder for Environment Services and Community Safety, Councillor Susan Hall who were in attendance.

### Looking Forward

In the future we will be considering further the safer communities element of our roles and addressing the implications of Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) on the council and keeping a watching brief on how it will operate on the ground, In line with this we will be addressing how the council ensures we are implementing the 'Duty to Involve' that has recently come into force. The 'Duty to Involve' seeks to ensure that local people have their say and a culture of engagement and empowerment is embedded.

In 2009/10 we will also be ensuring that we are closely involved in the development of the council's Gypsy and Traveller Strategy.

The Overview and Scrutiny work programme for 2009/2010 also features a number of key issues that fit within our remit including Communications and Fear of Crime and Young People and Crime. We hope to be closely involved in this work.



***Councillor Anthony Seymour***  
***Policy Lead***



***Councillor Nana Asante***  
***Performance Lead***

# Report from the Lead Members for Sustainable Development and Enterprise

In 2008/09 we have looked at issues which are central to the quality of life of our tenants and residents. Our work has dealt with key strategic issues for the borough's future alongside issues at an operational level which impact on our residents' daily lives. These issues are further detailed below:

## Scrutiny review of the Right to Manage

Between November 2008 and January 2009 a scrutiny review group (jointly chaired by Councillor Dinesh Solanki and Councillor Jerry Miles) investigated a number of concerns which had been raised by residents and brought forward by the Portfolio Holder regarding the Right to Manage process and the Independent Tenant Advisor being implemented in the borough.



These concerns centred on how the Right to Manage process has been conducted within Harrow and that many residents did not feel the process had been clearly or properly explained to them.

This investigation was conducted in the form of a two day challenge panel during which the review group questioned witnesses ranging from officers to residents, the members of Harrow's various residents' groups including the Harrow Federation of Tenants and Residents Association to the Independent Tenant Advisor. The findings from the investigation led the review group to make a number of recommendations. These recommendations highlight the importance of clear and effective communication between officers, partners, residents and the importance of building and fostering good relationships with residents.

The recommendations form a base for improving relations between the parties concerned as well as a basis for clear and effective communication. The report has been well received by colleagues within the council. Scrutiny will of course monitor the progress of the Right to Manage process and the implementation of the challenge panel's recommendations.

## Other work

Due to the current economic situation our planned work on the town centre redevelopment has been put on hold.

The Local Development Framework Core Strategy was looked at briefly in September 2008 and is currently in the process of being prepared. The Core Strategy is expected to be adopted in 2010. As the Local Development Framework process continues, we will continue to monitor this issue and see what issues emerge from it.

More generally we have also carried out background work regarding the publication of notices and information for controlled parking zones. We have also looked informally at a number of issues ranging from residential development in back gardens to the improvements made by London Overground and their impact on Harrow; as well as the impact the recession has had on Harrow's small to medium enterprises and what is being done both nationally and locally (by the council and its partners) to address this issue and support this business base.

## **Looking forward**

One area that at present is a national and local priority is sustainability. We are currently undertaking a review of this wide ranging cross-cutting issue. Early issues that have been identified for possible consideration during the review include:

- How effectively the council uses its own resources
- How we are helping our business base through the current economic difficulties
- How we are engaging with our communities and safeguarding its cohesiveness.

The specific coverage of the review will be looked at in more detail in the course of the review's scoping stage. We will also need to look at how well Harrow has developed its policies and implementation of sustainability as well as how to improve and further extend the scope the council has for incorporating sustainability into its service areas and service delivery.



***Councillor Jerry Miles***  
***Policy Lead***



***Councillor Dinesh Solanki***  
***Performance Lead***

## **Scrutiny Member Development programme 2008/09**

Building upon our previous years' Scrutiny Member Development Programme, this year we have continued to consolidate our skills and knowledge development. Following a training needs analysis of scrutiny councillors, the following aims and objectives were identified for the Scrutiny Member Development Programme for 2008/09:

- **TEAM:** To develop a team spirit for scrutiny
- **EXPERTISE:** To develop sufficient expertise and technical knowledge to deliver effective challenge
- **ROLES:** To consolidate the scrutiny structure and clarify the understanding of the roles within it e.g. scrutiny leads and scrutiny chairmen/ vice-chairmen
- **LEADERSHIP:** To develop leadership and facilitation skills
- **RESEARCH:** To enhance research and analytical skills
- **INFLUENCE:** To assert scrutiny's influencing role by targeting recommendations
- **RELATIONSHIPS:** To build relationships externally with partner organisations and internally with officers and the Executive

In addition to the events run through Harrow's corporate member development programme, a number of scrutiny-specific activities run throughout the year sought to address the areas identified above, as outlined below.

### **Briefings**

As they proved so valuable to our work last year, we have continued with quarterly briefing sessions for scrutiny lead members with the relevant Corporate Directors, in addition to written and verbal briefings from our Scrutiny Team. More widely, briefing sessions were held before a number of committee meetings giving members and co-optees the opportunity to discuss questioning strategies for issues on the committee agendas. Building on the role of scrutiny lead members, these sessions enabled the scrutiny lead members to then lead on the issues in their areas of expertise in the committee meetings.

Furthermore, following the success of previous subject-specific briefings, this year a performance and finance refresher training session was held on 6 October 2008, aimed at members of the Performance and Finance Sub-Committee.

### **Peer learning**

Sharing experiences with and learning from colleagues carrying out similar duties to us is important. To this end, we have visited other boroughs to see their scrutiny committees in action – a number of us observed committee meetings at Hillingdon and Brent. These were valuable peer-led learning and development opportunities with especially with regard to chairing techniques, questioning styles and learning from general good practice. Likewise, we have had scrutiny colleagues from other boroughs come to our meetings to watch us in action – we have welcomed councillors from Brent and Ealing Councils to our Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Performance and Finance Sub-Committee.

### **Scrutiny in the community**

Venturing out of the Civic Centre, we held one of our committee meetings in a 'community setting'. On 23 September 2008, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was held at Northwick Park Hospital and focused solely on issues relating to the hospital. This follows other boroughs' experiences that such meetings engage the public more easily whilst also encouraging a forging of a team spirit and strategic style of questioning, which can also be transferred to committee meetings at the Civic Centre. We thank North West London Hospitals for opening out their facilities to us and accommodating our meeting.

### **Utilising external expertise**

We asked the IDeA to facilitate a group session on 22 September 2008 to review the impact of the reconfiguration of scrutiny structures in Harrow. This session afforded us with the opportunity for informal discussions between members with a view to develop an effective scrutiny function. It also served as a team building session for members involved in scrutiny.

We have continued to also take advantage of training sessions held by external providers, for example one of our scrutiny lead members went to Birmingham last summer to attend a session on chairing scrutiny run by Inlogov. Past experience has highlighted how valuable these one-off training courses can be.

### **Looking forward**

Not to rest on our laurels, in Harrow we have always sought to receive feedback on our processes and our work. To this effect, researchers from the Evidence for Accountability project (from a variety of academic institutions) which used one of our reviews ('Delivering a Strengthened Community and Voluntary Sector for Harrow') as a case study, presented their observations of our evidence-gathering and review processes in a session in February 2009. More detail on the findings of this project is detailed elsewhere. We will use the comments from the researchers to continue to improve both our own scrutiny skills and our wider processes.

We will use the learning and successes from this year's Scrutiny Member Development Programme to inform how we approach next year's programme.

## Call- In Sub Committee

The call-in process enables decisions that have been taken but not yet implemented by the cabinet, portfolio holders or officers to be examined by members of the call-in sub committee. A decision can be called in by:

- Any six members of the council, and additionally, in relation to Executive decisions on education matters only, any six Members of the Council and the voting co-opted members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- Any member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- 150 members of the public, (defined as anyone registered on the electoral roll of the borough).

Whoever is calling in the decision must notify the Chief Executive and specify the grounds upon which the call in is being made. These are:

1. Inadequate consultation has been undertaken with stakeholders prior to the decision
2. The absence of adequate evidence on which to base a decision
3. The decision is contrary to the policy framework, or contrary to, or not wholly in accordance with, the budget framework
4. The action is not proportionate to the desired outcome
5. A potential human rights challenge
6. Insufficient consideration of legal and financial advice.

The call-in sub committee can reach one of the following conclusions:

- The challenge to the decision should be taken no further and the decision should be implemented
- The decision is contrary to the policy framework or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the budget framework and should therefore be referred to the council
- The matter should be referred back to the decision taker for reconsideration.

During 2008/09 one non-education decision was called in. The decision to make tennis courts in West Harrow Recreation Ground available to lease was called in on the grounds that there had been inadequate consultation with stakeholders prior to the decision and there was inadequate evidence upon which to base a decision. The sub committee upheld the call-in and the decision was referred back to the Portfolio Holder for Major Contracts and Property.

During 2008/09, no education decisions were called in.

<b>Statistics – call-in</b>	<b>2008/09</b>	<b>2007/08</b>
Committee meetings:	1	3
Decisions called-in:	1	3
Call-ins triggered by residents	0	1
Call-ins rejected:	0	3
Call-ins upheld:	1	0
Decisions altered following call-in:	0	N/A



Date of decision	Date of call-in	Issue	Reason for call-in	Outcome of call-in
Cabinet 23 <sup>rd</sup> March 2009	7 <sup>th</sup> April 2009	Decision to make available for lease tennis courts in West Harrow Recreation Ground	1, 2	Upheld



***Councillor Anthony Seymour  
Chairman***



***Councillor Mitzi Green  
Vice Chairman***

## **Conclusion**

This has been a good year for scrutiny, we have tested our new structures and have delivered some excellent projects. This is the final year of this administration and possibly our final year as scrutiny councillors so we look forward to continuing our work and supporting the delivery of excellent services to our local residents.

**Harrow Scrutiny Councillors**  
**June 2009**